

AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS

Claim 1. (Original) A polymer which comprises, optionally consists essentially of:

- (a) from about 5 to about 92.5 wt.-% of at least one alkyl acrylate, the homopolymers of which have a Tg of less than or equal to about -40°C (constituent a);
- (b) from about 2.5 to about 30 wt.-% of at least one alkyl (meth)acrylate, the homopolymers of which have a Tg of from about -25°C to about 0°C (constituent b);
- (c) from about 2.5 to about 30 wt.-% of at least one alkyl (meth)acrylate, the homopolymers of which have a Tg of from about 0°C to about 20°C (constituent c);
- (d) from about 1 to about 30 wt.-% of at least one ethylenically unsaturated monomer, the homopolymers of which have a Tg of greater than or equal to about 20°C, and which do not contain a functional group selected from hydroxyl, acid, acid anhydride, nitro, epoxy and amino groups (constituent d);
- (e) from about 0 to about 10 wt.-% of at least one ethylenically unsaturated monomer having at least one acid group or acid anhydride group (constituent e); and
- (f) from about 0 to about 60 wt.-% of at least one ethylenically unsaturated monomer having either no further functional group or in addition to the ethylenically unsaturated group at least one functional group other than an acid or an acid anhydride group (constituent f).

Claim 2. (Currently Amended) ~~A~~ The polymer according to claim 1, where constituent 'a' comprises at least one alkyl acrylate selected from the group consisting of n-butyl acrylate, 2-ethylbutyl acrylate, hexyl acrylate, 2-ethylhexyl acrylate, nonyl acrylate and octyl acrylate.

Claim 3. (Currently Amended) ~~A~~ The polymer according to ~~either preceding claim 1,~~ where constituent 'b' comprises at least one alkyl (meth)acrylate selected from the group consisting of ethyl acrylate, sec-butyl acrylate, dodecyl acrylate, isobutyl acrylate and isopropyl acrylate.

Claim 4. (Currently Amended) ~~A~~ The polymer according to ~~any preceding~~ claim 1, where constituent 'c' comprises at least one alkyl (meth)acrylate selected from the group consisting of methyl acrylate and n-butyl methacrylate.

Claim 5. (Currently Amended) ~~A~~ The polymer according to ~~any preceding~~ claim 1, where constituent 'd' comprises a monomer which is selected from the group consisting of: (i) alkyl (meth)acrylates, (ii) vinylaromatic compounds, (iii) vinylhalides, (iv) vinylnitriles and (v) vinylesters of carboxylic acids.

Claim 6. (Currently Amended) ~~A~~ The polymer according to claim 5, where constituent 'd' comprises at least one ethylenically unsaturated monomer selected from the group consisting of methyl methacrylate, tert-butyl acrylate, ~~metylstyrene~~ methylstyrene, para-methylstyrene, tert-butylstyrene, styrene, vinyl chloride, methacrylonitrile, vinyl acetate and vinyl formate.

Claim 7. (Currently Amended) ~~A~~ The polymer according to ~~any preceding~~ claim 1, where constituent 'e' comprises at least one ethylenically unsaturated monomer selected from the group consisting of (meth)acrylic acid, maleic acid, maleic acid anhydride, maleic acid monoester and fumaric acid monoester.

Claim 8. (Currently Amended) ~~A~~ The polymer according to ~~any preceding~~ claim 1, where constituent 'f' comprises at least one ethylenically unsaturated compound having a group selected from the groups consisting of epoxy groups, hydroxyl groups, ethyl imidazolidone groups, N-methylol groups, carbonyl groups or further ethylenically unsaturated groups which are not conjugated with the other ethylenically unsaturated group.

Claim 9. (Currently Amended) ~~A~~ The polymer according to ~~any preceding~~ claim 1, where greater than or equal to about 85 wt.-% of the polymer comprises 2-ethylhexyl acrylate, ethyl acrylate and methyl acrylate.

Claim 10. (Currently Amended) ~~A~~ The polymer according to ~~any preceding~~ claim 1, which comprises 2-ethylhexyl acrylate, ethyl acrylate, methyl acrylate and styrene, and optionally (meth)acrylic acid, ethyl imidazolidone methacrylate, n-butyl acrylate, n-dodecyl methacrylate and/or methyl methacrylate.

Claim 11. (Currently Amended) ~~A~~ The polymer according to claim 10, which comprises:

- (a) from about 60 to 70 wt.-% of 2-ethylhexyl acrylate,
- (b) from about 10 to about 15 wt.-% of ethyl acrylate,
- (c) from about 10 to about 15 wt.-% of methyl acrylate,
- (d) from about 1 to about 5 wt.-% of styrene, 30
- (e) from about 0.5 to about 2 wt.-% of acrylic acid and from about 0.5 to about 2 wt.-% of methacrylic acid, and
- (f) from about 1 to about 5 wt.-% of ethyl imidazolidone methacrylate, from about 0 to about 1 wt.-% of n-butyl acrylate, from about 0 to about 0.5 wt.-% of n-dodecyl methacrylate and/or from about 0 to about 1 wt.-% methyl methacrylate.

Claim 12. (Currently Amended) An aqueous polymer dispersion comprising a polymer according to ~~any preceding~~ claim 1 which is dispersed in an aqueous medium.

Claim 13. (Currently Amended) ~~A~~ The dispersion according to claim 12, which comprises at least one aliphatic emulsifier.

Claim 14. (Currently Amended) ~~A~~ The dispersion according to ~~either~~ claim 12, ~~or 13~~, which comprises at least one aliphatic emulsifier and one aromatic emulsifier.

Claim 15. (Canceled)

Claim 16. (Canceled)

Claim 17. (Currently Amended) Process for preparing a polymer according to ~~any of claims 1 to 11 and/or a dispersion according to any of claims 12 to 14~~, claim 1 by contacting the constituents 'a', 'b', 'c', and 'd' and optionally 'e' and/or 'f' in form of the monomers with a suitable polymerization initiator in a reaction medium.

Claim 18. (Original) Process according to claim 17, where during polymerization a chain transfer agent is gradually added to the reaction medium.

Claim 19. (Currently Amended) Process according to either claim 17, ~~or 18~~, where a polymerized seed is initially added to the reaction medium whereby the composition of the polymerized seed differs in at least one constituent from the composition of the monomers in the reaction medium.

Claim 20. (Original) Process according to claim 19, where the polymerized seed contains n-butyl acrylate and the monomers in the reaction medium do not contain n-butyl acrylate.

Claim 21. (Currently Amended) Polymer according to claim 1 ~~any of claims 1 to 11 and/or a dispersion according to any of claims 12 to 14~~, which is obtained and/or obtainable from the a process according to any of claims 17 to 20 which comprises by contacting the constituents 'a', 'b', 'c', and 'd' and optionally 'e' and/or 'f' in form of the monomers with a suitable polymerization initiator in a reaction medium.